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PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY, REARMAMENT, AND DIVISION AT THE 1950S KIRCHENTAGE”

June 1, 2013 · by [Matthew D. Hockenos](#) · in [News and Notes, Volume 19 Number 2 \(June 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

Contemporary Church History Quarterly

Volume 19, Number 2 (June 2013)

Article Note: Benjamin Pearson, “The Pluralization of Protestant Politics: Public Responsibility, Rearmament, and Division at the 1950s *Kirchentage*” *Central European History* 43 (2010), 270-300.

By Matthew D. Hockenos, Skidmore College



Kirchentag 1954 in Leipzig. Source: Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-25414-0111 / CC-BY-SA

After WWII and twelve years of Nazi rule Catholic and Protestant church leaders in Germany agreed that at the center of Germany’s reconstruction needed to be a renewal of Christian values. They urged church members to take active, personal responsibility for political life. This was an especially strong sentiment among members of the former Confessing Church. The churches participated in the establishment of the Christian Democratic Union so that Christian values could have a more influential role in the political sphere and Reinhold von Thadden-Trieglaff founded the *Kirchentag* in 1949 to strengthen the faith and public responsibility of Protestant laity. Although Catholics and Protestants co-existed in the CDU it was in the late 1940s and early 1950s an uncomfortable co-existence because they differed on several issues, such as division, rearmament, and confessional schools.

Adenauer’s policies challenged Christian unity. He won over Catholics and many conservative Protestants but lost the Protestant Left associated with Karl Barth, Gustav Heinemann, and Martin Niemöller. Pearson traces the manifestations of this split in the political debates that took place in the 1950s *Kirchentage*. The debates in the early 1950s were so caustic that “rather than promoting public responsibility and Christian unity for the transformation of German society, the churches were instead tearing themselves apart.” Eventually, however, the split among Protestants, he argues, forced the Protestant Church “to accept-even embrace-the liberal democratic value of

political pluralism.” Protestants from both sides came to see political disagreement and debate as a positive sign of a working democracy.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT: REASSESSING CONTEMPORARY CHURCH HISTORY

June 1, 2013 · by [Steven Schroeder](#) · in [News and Notes, Volume 19 Number 2 \(June 2013\)](#) · [Edit](#)

Contemporary Church History Quarterly

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Conference Announcement: Reassessing Contemporary Church History, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, July 25-27, 2013

By Steven Schroeder, University of the Fraser Valley

Members of the editorial board of *Contemporary Church History Quarterly* are pleased to announce a conference entitled “Reassessing Contemporary Church History,” to be held at the University of British Columbia from July 25-27, 2013. The conference will serve three purposes: it will bring together members of the editorial board and a number of prominent scholars from Germany, the United States, and Canada to discuss how to expand the scope and functions of the *Quarterly*; it will provide a forum for the leading scholars in the field to present cutting-edge research and broaden the discipline; and it will provide an ideal setting for these scholars to honor the pioneering work of Professor John Conway, who has distinguished himself not only through his scholarly work but in his tireless efforts to bring together scholars from multiple disciplines and nations.

The conference will begin at Regent College on Thursday, July 25, with the keynote address by Professor Mark Noll, titled: “The future of World Christianity.” This lecture is open for all to attend. After two days of presentations, panel discussions, and board meetings, the conference will conclude on Saturday, July 27, with a tribute dinner to Professor John Conway, and an outing to view the magnificent fireworks display – the annual “Celebration of Light” – in the Vancouver harbor.

The conference program is as follows:

Thursday, July 25

Location: Regent College, 5800 University Boulevard, Vancouver

7:00 Keynote Address: Mark Noll, “The Future of World Christianity”

Friday, July 26

Location: Buchanan Tower, UBC (11th Floor Seminar Room)

9:00-10:45 The Changing Historiography of the “Church Struggle”, 1945 – 2013

Chair: Lauren Faulkner (University of Notre Dame, USA)

Commentator: Gerhard Besier (Technische Universität, Dresden)

1. Mark Edward Ruff (Saint Louis University, USA)- “Historiographical Battles in the 1960s after Hochhuth and the Reception of John Conway’s The Nazi Persecution of the Churches in Germany”
2. Robert Ericksen (Pacific Lutheran University, USA) – “Church Historians, Profane Historians and our Odyssey since Wilhelm Niemoeller”
3. Manfred Gailus (Technische Universität Berlin) – „Ist die “Aufarbeitung” der NS-Zeit beendet? Anmerkungen zur kirchlichen Erinnerungskultur seit der Wende von 1989/90”

11:15-1:00 Theology, Theological Changes and the Ecumenical Movement

Chair: Steven Schroeder (University of the Fraser Valley, Canada)

Commentator: Kevin Spicer (Stonehill College, USA)

1. Victoria Barnett (United States Memorial Holocaust Museum) – “Boundary Crossings: Conversations between the Ecumenical Movement and Catholic and Jewish Representatives, 1932 – 1948”
2. Matthew Hockenos (Skidmore College) – “From Nationalist to Ecumenist: The Transformation of Martin Niemöller’s Theology”
3. Wilhelm Damberg (Ruhr-Universität-Bochum) – „Vergangenheitsbewältigung und Theologie nach dem Konzil: J.B. Metz, die politische Theologie und die Würzburger Synode (1971-1975)“

2:00 – 4:15 Expanding the borders: Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Narratives

Chair: Beth-Griech Polelle (Bowling Green State University, USA)

1. Thomas Großbölting (Westfälische-Wilhelms-Universität Münster): “Kirchenkampf gibt es immer: Erinnerungspolitik in innerkirchlichen Konflikten”
2. Kyle Jantzen (Ambrose University College, Canada) : “Other Church Struggles? Church-State Relations in Hitler’s Germany and Mobutu’s Zaire”
3. Suzanne Brown-Fleming (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum): “Catholics in the International Tracing Service: Research Opportunities”

4. Bjorn Krondorfer (Northern Arizona University): “Gender and Post-Conflict Representations: Autobiographical Writings of German Theologians after 1945”

6:00 – 9:00 Dinner Cruise: Vancouver Harbor

Saturday, July 27

Location: Regent College, (Basement, Rooms 11 &14)

9:00- 10:30 Expanding the profile of the Contemporary Church History Quarterly

11:00- 1:00 Creating a Transatlantic Database

6:00 – 9:00 Dinner and Tribute to Professor John Conway

10:00 – 11:00 Vancouver Harbor Fireworks (Celebration of Light)